

What I'd Tell Mikhail Sergeyevich

By GEORGE P. SHULTZ

To Soviet Executive President Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev:

Mr. President, I've read the speech you made after you were inaugurated as the new executive president. I didn't even have to go to the CIA for it. I just called up your consulate in San Francisco and got it. Full text. I'm a believer in reading the text. What did the man himself say? Never mind what the reporter said he said.

So I read it and, as always, Mikhail Sergeyevich, you light up the landscape with your ideas. It was a bold and powerful speech. You speak about "genuine people power." About "building a rule-of-law country." Then you say, "No system of power can replace morality, which is necessary in any given society." You say: "In the past, the inner development of the individual in this country was denigrated as idealism, but now we have to pay a dear price for this. We need a different conscientious attitude to work, science, education and the arts, to culture in the broadest sense of the word." You say: "We need to create conditions for all spiritual values to be appreciated in society as a vital condition for full-blooded life and progress."

Mikhail Sergeyevich, I love to hear you say such things. You're right on the mark. These are good words. And here's what you say on the subject of governance:

"I proceed from the premise that the adoption of measures to strengthen the sovereignty of the Union republics and their economic and political independence and to enhance the status of autonomous republics and other national territorial entities should become a special concern of the presidency. . . . To confirm the republics' sovereignty and their right to self-determination, including secession, as specified in the Constitution, the Supreme Soviet should consider and define a lawful mechanism for secession from the Union as soon as possible."

Self-Determination

Well, those again are significant statements. You seem to envisage a looser federation combined with the idea of self-determination. I might note that if you manage to put your country on a system where markets, not political central governments, make the decisions, then some of the strains that go with the ethnic differences will be moderated. Also, remember, borders are not what they used to be. If you will let them be open, let people cross them easily, then you can moderate some of the strains.

In your speech, you go to the heart of the problem of governance in this day and age. Today, all sizable countries—and lots of smaller ones—face diversity: ethnic diversity, intense national aspirations, cultural diversity, religious diversity. That's characteristic of our world. It can't be

stamped out. It won't be stamped out. And we shouldn't want to stamp it out.

So those who govern have to welcome the diversity and learn how to manage it. Some countries have had reasonable success in doing this. The U.S. has. Canada has. In a very different way, Switzerland has. A lot of countries, however, have come a cropper. Look at the problems of even a small country such as Fiji, with its Fijian-Indian problem, or Sri Lanka with the tensions generated by the Tamil minority. We see the problem the world over.

Which brings me, Mikhail Sergeyevich, to Lithuania. Let's look at the facts. First

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of all, the Lithuanians want their independence. Nobody has any doubt about that. I hear some of your spokesmen question it because the Lithuanians haven't had a plebiscite. But they have had the closest thing to a plebiscite that you can get. I saw a statement of yours that acknowledged that fact, although you said that you doubted their wisdom in wanting independence. Still they want it.

I thought you very astutely laid the predicate for accepting Lithuanian independence when you unearthed the infamous von Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact and denounced it along with the Hitler-Stalin deal. Then your Supreme Soviet voted that the annexation of Lithuania and the other Baltic countries was illegal. Knowing you are a lawyer, I thought you were laying the groundwork for their realization of that independence and also for differentiating the Baltic states from the other republics in the U.S.S.R.

As you know, I'm not in a position to speak for the U.S. anymore. But let me tell you what I would say if I were:

As far as the U.S. is concerned, it's not a question of secession. We never recognized the annexation of the Baltic states by the Soviet Union in the first place. So we stand with the Lithuanians. They want independence. They are independent. I have walked by their flag hanging in the lobby of the State Department many times. We recognized Lithuania and we have done so continuously since 1940. I thought that just perhaps when you declared that annexa-

tion to be illegal, as your Supreme Soviet did only a few months ago, you were coming around to the same point of view.

But your use of the Soviet army in Lithuania and the recent passage of a Soviet law setting up a five-year process governing secession cut against the logic of your own position. And it means negotiation under duress. This combination of Soviet military power and after-the-fact legislation can in the long run only produce an agreement that will be regarded—by the Lithuanian people and the world—as unequal and illegitimate.

Therefore, Mikhail Sergeyevich, reverse the order of these proceedings: Take the Soviet army out of its threatening positions in Lithuania, announce your acceptance of Lithuanian independence and then—under really equal terms—negotiate the details of the separation.

Finally, Mr. President, let me remind you that this is the information age. Let me quote Lech Walesa from a statement he made last fall when conditions in Poland were still dicey. He said:

"Technology enforces certain solutions. Satellite dishes, computers, videos, international telephone lines force pluralism and freedom onto a society. Today Stalin is impossible. Now you say, what about China? The future monuments in China will be to those who have been shot. China will come back to pluralism, democracy and freedom. They won't be able to destroy all our television sets. People can't do without telephones. Of course, technological history can't be turned back. That's why I'm so certain about victory."

An Inherent Transparency

Mr. President, we live in a world where people know what's going on. There's a kind of an inherent transparency that we should continue to build up. It is in your interest to do so.

Mikhail Sergeyevich, you are a great leader, and you have established a place that is unique in many respects. A new world order is forming—not just a new European order but truly a new world order. What we need right now are statesmen of the caliber of those who guided us in the West at the end of World War II, and gave us the liberal, open political and economic system that has worked so well. We are at a moment in history that comes perhaps only every half-century; there is a chance to design the shape of what's ahead of us. And you, Mr. President, are not only a man of action but obviously also a man of ideas. Stay on board. Continue to be a part of this new drama. We need you.

Mr. Shultz, a fellow at Stanford's Hoover Institution, was secretary of state in the Reagan administration. This is excerpted from remarks to the World Affairs Council in San Francisco.